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THE EQUAL SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGN IN PENNSYLVANIA

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Woman suffrage is one of the modern developments of justice which is being secured so rapidly all over the world that many people still err in thinking of it as a comparatively young ideal. In Pennsylvania, Hannah Penn initiated the movement when she served the colony as its proprietary ruler for nine years after the death of her husband, William, in 1718. The struggles of pioneer days, absorption in Indian and other wars, the determining of the large outlines of the democratic form of government, put the woman suffrage question into the background until the Civil War had finally settled the destiny of the states and the solidity of the Union was achieved. Though the first woman's rights convention was held in 1848, the movement was not widely launched until some years later. The first organized gathering of suffragists in Pennsylvania was held in Philadelphia in 1869. Philadelphia, being largely Quaker, the new reform took root there as an anti-slavery adjunct, the same people being interested in both movements. At this first meeting which became the state's first woman suffrage convention, the state body, the Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association, was organized; Miss Mary Grew was elected president and among the other officers were such noted women as Mrs. Charlotte L. Peirce, vice-president, Mrs. Gudelius Jones, treasurer, and Miss Annie Heacock, secretary. Mr. John R. Wildman was second vice-president. Lucretia Mott, Eliza Sproat Turner, Sarah C. F. Hallowell, Mrs. Mercy Williamson were other pioneer workers. The object of the organization was "to secure for women the exercise of the right of suffrage and to effect such changes in the laws as shall recognize the equal rights of women with men." There has been no deviation from this purpose throughout the years. The constitution was revised to meet new conditions in 1913, but the only change made in this article was to condense it into one phrase, "to secure woman suffrage."

From the beginning the Pennsylvania suffrage movement has been conducted along educational lines. In the earlier years this

educational work consisted largely in holding meetings, writing newspaper and magazine articles, distributing literature. Annual state conventions were held in different cities, Philadelphia, Lancaster, Easton, West Chester, Reading, Pittsburgh, Lewistown, Oxford, Norristown, Newtown, Kenneth Square, Harrisburg being among the places so visited. Mrs. Lucretia L. Blankenburg of Philadelphia was state president from 1894 to 1908 and was followed by Mrs. Rachel Foster Avery who served two years. In 1910 Mrs. Avery moved out of the state and Mrs. Ellen H. E. Price became president, serving two years also. Until 1910 the only headquarters were the homes of the officers and there were no salaried workers, but the work had grown so heavy that in the autumn of that year the first state headquarters were opened in an office building in Philadelphia with a secretary in charge. In 1912 the state officers were moved to Harrisburg in order to concentrate upon the legislature and will remain in the capital until the end of the campaign, being also more centrally located as a basis of operations for the work radiating over the state. In addition to these state headquarters, ten cities now have local headquarters, all working in close coöperation with the state centre. By the summer of 1915, it is planned to have at least thirty of these local headquarters advantageously distributed over the extensive territory of the state.

Nine states of the Union and Alaska have fully enfranchised their women, in twenty-one more states women have partial suffrage, but in Pennsylvania women are totally disfranchised, not even voting on school matters. As in all the other states, so in Pennsylvania woman suffrage can be secured only through an amendment to the constitution. A resolution providing for the submission of such an amendment must pass two successive sessions of the state legislature by a majority vote in both houses, and be ratified by a majority of those voting on the question at the following general election. Suffrage work in our state was therefore of a passive nature until such legislative action could be secured. The first attempt to get the resolution through the legislature was made in 1911. There was a hearing before the members of the senate and house at Harrisburg on March 14, 1911, but no legislative action was secured. The resolution was referred to a commission to revise and codify the election laws of Pennsylvania, which commission had been appointed by the legislature. This commission granted a hearing on the reso-

lution in Philadelphia on March 22, 1912, the only result of which was a statement in the official report which this commission made to the legislature of 1913, that the question of woman suffrage was not german to the business of the commission, and consequently no recommendation by the commission was made. In January, 1913, the resolution was again introduced in the legislature, passed in the house of representatives by a vote of 131 to 70, and after a long, close contest in the senate by a vote of 26 to 22. It has been said that it was the most bitterly fought successful bill of many legislative years. In the senate, it was twice saved from defeat by the deciding vote of the lieutenant-governor, it being the first time in thirteen years that the presiding officer had been called upon to vote.

The history of the work is thus divided into two spans,—the passive or generalized period from 1869 to 1913, and the active or political campaign from 1913 to November, 1915. Immediately following the legislative victory of April, 1913, plans for the present campaign were outlined. It was reiterated that it would be continued as an educational campaign, using all the modern educational methods and opportunities. For a time the activities of the English militants were so widely and so almost exclusively heralded in all the newspapers in this country that the public began to think that militancy would soon become the method of the American advocates. To make our position clear, the state executive committee early in 1913 issued a statement committing the Pennsylvania association to the continuance of its "educational methods in keeping with the dignity of the movement and the character of the women engaged in it."

The direction of the campaign is under the state association which consists of the local organizations formed throughout the sixty-seven counties of the state. All details are decided by the state executive committee, comprised of the eleven state officers and chairmen of the standing committees. The local groups are organized as clubs, leagues, societies or branches of the woman suffrage party, all being affiliated with the state body. Because of its effectiveness for campaign purposes, the party form of organization is that most advocated now. It is organized by political districts, but the general propaganda it conducts is identical with that of other groups. Under the state chairman, the state is arbitrarily divided

into nine divisions of seven or eight counties each with a "division chairman" for each of the nine sections. Under these division chairmen, there is a county chairman in each county and under her a legislative district leader for each legislative district in the county. The legislative district is again subdivided with leaders and officers for each part—city, borough or township chairmen, ward and precinct captains. House to house canvassing is done and the opinions of all adults registered, resulting in a poll of the voters of each election district. Men have always been staunch supporters of the suffrage movement, all the regular organizations having many men members. To emphasize their determination and to assist specially with legislative work, men's leagues for woman suffrage have been formed in a number of cities, Philadelphia, Lansdowne and Pittsburgh having the largest leagues.

One effort of the suffragists has been to secure action within the men's various political parties. Probably the most convincing proof of the growth of the sentiment for equal suffrage in Pennsylvania has been the change of attitude on the part of these parties. For many years the Prohibition and Socialist were the only platforms in which the issue was even mentioned. Today every party in the state has a plank in its platform advocating the passage of our bill by the next legislature, and four of the five platforms contain also a strong endorsement of woman suffrage itself. It is interesting to note that although the National Democratic party has done nothing to forward federal action on woman suffrage, and is in effect opposed to the movement, our state Democratic party helped to secure the passage of our bill in 1913, and the plank in its platform unequivocally endorses votes for women. These successes are due chiefly to the work of the woman suffrage party organizations which at the appropriate time brought constituency pressure to bear by informing and reminding the various parties' county committeemen and candidates of the wishes of the people at home.

Since the suffrage resolution must be passed again by the legislature of 1915, another piece of practical campaign work was to see that candidates for this next legislature were in favor of and would vote for our bill. As many candidates as possible were interviewed in person or by letter by a committee from the suffrage organization in their district. In some counties, every candidate on every ticket was pledged. The United States senatorial and gubernatorial can-

didates were likewise asked to announce their positions. All did so favorably, except one gubernatorial candidate in the Democratic party. After giving this candidate every possible opportunity, the suffragists opposed him at the spring primaries and his defeat left us with all the gubernatorial candidates in favor of woman suffrage.

The detailed methods of the campaign are embodied in its five departments of organization, finance, publicity, literature, and speakers bureau. In addition to the officers who are constantly active there are six field organizers.

From the publicity department the press chairman sends weekly bulletins to newspapers in every county, prepares advance notices for meetings and events in unorganized communities and attends to the general campaign publicity features. Eight special suffrage editions of daily newspapers have been issued in various cities and similar editions are planned for other towns during the remainder of the campaign.

The literature department serves to supply local organizations and individuals and has become a well established business, purchasing over \$3,000 worth of literature and supplies in nine months in 1914. All general suffrage publications are kept in stock and leaflets applying especially to Pennsylvania are being printed. Among the latter are *Women under Pennsylvania Laws*, giving the legal discriminations against women in this state, *The Status of Woman Suffrage in Pennsylvania* and *Opinions of Prominent Pennsylvania Catholic Clergy*, the titles of which are self-explanatory. In great demand also are the novelties and supplies—votes for women fans, buttons, paper napkins, pennants, note-paper, drinking cups, lanterns, flowers, lead pencils, candy, children's toys. Three workers are kept busy filling orders in this department which occupies two rooms.

The speakers bureau serves as a non-profit making agency to bring the best speakers in the country into Pennsylvania, endeavoring to supply each locality with the speaker best suited to it and to distribute the famous speakers fairly over the state. Among those for whom tours have been or are being arranged are Jessie Ackerman, Sophonisba Breckinridge, Horace Bridges, Margaret Foley, Beatrice Forbes Robertson Hale, Clara S. Laddey, Rabbi J. Leonard Levy, Scott Nearing, Senator Helen Ring Robinson, Dr. Anna H. Shaw, Anna Garland Spencer, Mary Church Terrell, Charles Zueblin.

In the closing period of all campaigns, open air meetings become

necessary and popular. At these a group of workers take charge, one speaking more often from an automobile than from the historic soap box, others passing collection baskets and asking adherents to join by signing a membership card. Without an exception these meetings in Pennsylvania have been dignified and orderly, the crowds being uniformly respectful. Booths at county fairs are another form of summer activity. From these decorated stands, speeches are made, literature distributed and propaganda conducted appropriate to such occasions.

A prize suffrage poster contest was held in 1913, the award of \$25 going to a young Philadelphia artist, Miss Iva Ritter. Suffrage plays by amateurs and moving picture films are also part of the educational work. Prizes for the best school essays have been given; debates have been held; organizations of all kinds addressed. The Pennsylvania State Grange (properly called the Patrons of Husbandry), the Pennsylvania Farmers Alliance, the Pennsylvania Federation of Labor, the State Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends, the Eastern Pennsylvania Methodist Conference have all passed strong suffrage resolutions. We have also been benefited by the endorsement of such important national bodies as the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Women's Trade Union League, the National Education Association, and it is fully expected that the Pennsylvania branches of these bodies at their next state meetings will confirm these endorsements. More people have endorsed woman suffrage than have ever endorsed any one other public movement.

The funds for the campaign are raised chiefly by public subscription. Most of the organizations are non-dues paying and in all cases the dues are small, ranging from 25 cents to a dollar. Other incomes from sales of literature, collections at meetings, etc., are also comparatively small. Until the outbreak of the European war, the treasury was well supported, but that calamity has greatly decreased contributions. The special efforts which women are making in this period of stress are characteristic of their deep earnestness. One woman who lives on a farm is making cottage cheese which she sells in a neighboring town and by which she is giving \$50 this year. At 10 cents a quart, this contribution means five hundred quarts patiently, quietly, constantly churned, sold and delivered. A \$25 contribution comes as the result of giving up a new winter suit.

The hundreds of small contributions represent many sacrifices and are the foundation of the one \$5,000 contribution from a Pennsylvania woman who wishes to be an anonymous donor.

Co-existent with their state work, Pennsylvania suffragists have always assisted with the national movement through the affiliation of the state association with the National American Woman Suffrage Association to the support of which \$1,000 was contributed in 1914 and \$500 additional paid for dues. The state congressional committee works in coöperation with the national congressional committee and consists of one member from each of the thirty-two congressional districts in the state. One of the most brilliant national suffrage conventions ever held met in Philadelphia in 1912 as the guest of the Pennsylvania state association.

As an organization, the Pennsylvania Woman Suffrage Association, like the national association, is absolutely non-partisan. By action of the state executive committee no state officer is permitted to become affiliated with any political party. Individual suffragists sometimes espouse political creeds, but leaders are urged not to join political parties. This attitude is due not only to the fact that partisanship would retard our progress but because of the not unnatural feeling that the women will wait until some party "makes good" and gives them their freedom.

To cite merely these facts and incidents about Pennsylvania's actual suffrage work is like putting bread on the table and nothing else. The woman suffrage movement is not an isolated issue—it is merely a vigorous compelling part of the whole world wide movement to secure social equality and political justice. Its progress is co-extensive with that of correlated struggles for human advancement, and as surely as the world grows better because juster and more humanly inclusive, so surely will the extension of the franchise be granted to women.

In November, 1915, another liberty bell will be ready to peal forth its message of freedom in Pennsylvania. This bell, the gift of Mrs. Katharine Wentworth Ruschenberger of Strafford, Pennsylvania, will be an exact bronze replica of the famous liberty bell. But, its clapper will be silenced by chains fastened to its yoke and will swing only when Pennsylvania women are free. This new liberty bell will make a tour of the state during 1915, arranged so that the bell will reach Philadelphia by November and be placed

in position to ring out its glad tidings after election day. In its way, this symbol, chained and mute, typifies the appeal which the women of Pennsylvania are making to their men. Not that we ask privilege but liberty—the same passionate desire that stirred in men's hearts a century ago is throbbing in our breasts today and for the same reasons. We, too, would be free to develop the finest race under the best conditions for the greatest good of all.